

Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
September 28, 2007

**DRAFT**

A meeting of the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee (VCCAC) was held on Friday, September 28, 2007 at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, 1601 Broad Rock Boulevard, Richmond.

**Members Present:**

Vince Burgess  
Scott Brown  
Julia Dillon  
Jim Dudley  
Thad Jones  
Worth Kenyon  
Karen Olichwier  
Sandra Ranicki  
Bill Van Thiel

**Members Absent:**

John Jackson

**Others Present:**

Dr. Lou Rossiter, PhD, College of William & Mary  
Steven Combs, DVS Director of Policy and Planning  
Anne Atkins, DVS Director of Communications  
Tasmyn Childress, DVS Office Assistant  
Judy Reid, DVS IT Program Assistant

**Materials Distributed**

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes of July 9, 2007 meeting
- JLC Position Paper – Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care
- Long-term Feasibility Study: Quality Care They Earned
- Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Dedication Ceremony Program
- Virginia is for Heroes Invitation

**Call to Order and Welcome**

Commissioner Burgess welcomed everyone, and called the meeting of the VCCAC to order at 10:10 a.m.

Sandra Ranicki, Administrator of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC), introduced her department managers:

- Robyn Jennings, Director of Nursing
- Robin Davis, Director of Marketing and Admissions
- Mary Hopkins, Director of Dietary Services
- Dana Rivera, Director of Social Services
- Tracy Morrison, Director of Finance
- Ghulam Nessar, Director of Pharmacy
- Tina Bush, Director of Housekeeping
- Dayton Mayo, Director of Human Resources
- Michael Stone, Director of Maintenance

Department managers not present were:

- Dr. Amjad Mughal, Medical Director
- Karen Bohannon, Director of Resident Assessments

The Commissioner praised Mrs. Ranicki for hiring an excellent management team to run the facility. He stated that her staff was instrumental to the success of the SBVCC dedication ceremony.

Steven Combs gave the SBVCC department managers a brief overview of the mission of the VCCAC.

The VCCAC members introduced themselves, after which the SBVCC department managers departed.

### **Roll Call and Quorum Determination**

Seven out of ten members were present; a quorum was determined to exist. Bill Van Thiel and Karen Olichwier arrived late bringing the voting members to nine.

### **Review and Approval of VCCAC July 9, 2007 Minutes**

The Commissioner asked the members to review the minutes of the July 9 meeting. A **motion** was made by Julia Dillon, and seconded by Jim Dudley, to approve the minutes as written. The decision was unanimous to approve the minutes as written.

### **Commissioner's Comments**

#### **Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care**

Commissioner Burgess called the members attention to the position paper on Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care, developed by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC). Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care is one of seven JLC Legislative Objectives for 2008.

The JLC objective parallels initiatives proposed by the Department of Veterans Services in Executive Order 19 (EO19), which charged the Department to identify ways to offer new, improved, or customized services to veterans, with a specific focus on disabled veterans.

A major EO19 focus area is quality of life. DVS has been working with the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) to offer expanded mental health services to Virginia veterans and their families. The JLC proposal calls for more publicity and funding for this issue. The JLC recommends that DVS oversee an expanded Mental Health Care program.

Commissioner Burgess stated that DVS had hired Martha Mead to coordinate DVS efforts. Ms. Mead is a retired state government employee, who worked in DMHMRSAS as the Director of Policy and Communication. He said that Ms. Mead is extremely knowledgeable in the field and has taken charge to move the Wounded Warrior Mental Health issues forward.

#### Virginia is for Heroes Conference

Commissioner Burgess next discussed the Virginia is for Heroes Conference, a joint effort of Virginia Commonwealth University's Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center and the Department of Veteran Services. The event is scheduled for October 17, 2007 at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond. This conference will focus on polytrauma and combat stress in returning military personnel.

Commissioner Burgess asked Anne Atkins to provide more detail on the conference. She stated that the United States Department of Veteran Affairs (USDVA) and the United States Department of Defense (DoD) are overwhelmed with providing care to veterans. She said that the USDVA and DoD were never intended to handle the care for veterans alone. The Virginia is for Heroes Conference will bring together public and private service providers in an effort to better understand this issue, and to begin to develop potential ways to better serve Virginia veterans.

Ms. Atkins said she plans to develop a draft identifying the gaps, how to fill the gaps and how to bring focus to the families, during the conference. The plan then will be used as a guide to help make resources available and reintegrate families in the community they reside in. The USDVA and DoD will be available at the conference for questions and comments.

#### Budget Cuts

Commissioner Burgess next turned to the current revenue shortfall faced by the Commonwealth. He said that state agencies were asked to submit proposals to reduce General Fund expenditures by 5%. He said that there would be no cuts in direct service; rather, the Department would make cuts by not filling administrative positions.

Commissioner Burgess noted that the Department of Veteran Services has an overall operating budget of approximately \$34 million, of which \$5.7 million is from the General Fund. The DVS budget reduction will total 5% of the \$5.7 million General Fund budget, or approximately \$288,000.

#### Cemetery Study

Commissioner Burgess next discussed the study of future cemetery needs, currently underway.

Mr. Combs reported that a contract was signed with the University of Virginia's Weldon Copper Center for Public Service to study the future veterans cemetery needs of Virginia's veterans. The purpose of study is to identify areas that are underserved or not served at all. The results of the study must be reported to the General Assembly by December 1, 2007.

DVS is currently working to get land transferred from the DoD to the Commonwealth of Virginia to construct the state's third veterans cemetery in Dublin. The new cemetery is expected to open in 2010.

#### Care Center Study

The Commissioner reported that the College of William & Mary's Schroeder Center for Healthcare Policy is conducting a care center study for the Department of Veteran Services. The report will include recommendations on the types and locations of additional long-term care facilities that will be needed to serve Virginia veterans.

#### Veteran Service Study

Finally, the Commissioner reported that the Department of Veteran Services received an unsolicited proposal from Virginia Tech to do a study on veteran service operations. It would take a look at how the service delivery system is set up in the Commonwealth to serve veterans. The study would cover questions such as what can be improved, and how to make those improvements.

The Department of Veteran Services has 23 offices and over 60 employees in those offices. The Commissioner believes that it is time to take an assessment of how the customers are being served. However, due to budget cuts, the idea of a partnership with Virginia Tech can not be entertained at this moment.

### **Report of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Dedication Ceremony**

Lead by Thad Jones, Anne Atkins, and Sandra Ranicki:

The dedication ceremony took place on September 26, 2007. Two hundred to 250 people were in attendance. A reception was held in the SBVCC dining area.

#### Contributions to the Ceremony

The Commissioner thanked Mr. Jones for all his efforts, which made the ceremony such a success. He also thanked Mr. Van Thiel of the Virginia Veterans Care Center and Mr. Ron White of the Department of General Services for their commitment to the construction of Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center.

Mrs. Ranicki thanked everyone on the committee and all the contributors that helped to make the facility a success. She said she would especially like to thank Ms. Atkins for her work on the dedication ceremony.

Mr. Jones also commended Ms. Atkins for her attention to details.

Ms. Atkins thanked everyone who contributed to the dedication ceremony.

## **Virginia Veterans Care Center Update**

Lead by Bill Van Thiel:

### **Cabinet Community Day**

Mr. Van Thiel reported that Governor Kaine and members of his cabinet visited the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) in August as part of Cabinet Community Day. The Governor toured the facility and spoke with VVCC residents, family members, and staff.

Secretary of Health and Human Resources Marilyn Tavenner also toured the VVCC. Mr. Van Thiel explained that she had a background in nursing, which allowed her to appreciate the level of care being delivered to Virginia veterans.

### **VVCC Renovation**

Mr. Van Thiel covered the status of ongoing VVCC renovations, including those to the elevator system. He explained that VVCC was purchasing custom-designed wardrobes from Virginia Correctional Enterprise, and that 60 pieces had already been received. The VVCC would continue to receive 60 pieces every two weeks until 240 wardrobes are received.

### **Open Positions and Salary Alignment**

Mr. Van Thiel said that the VVCC Nutritionist and the VVCC Activities Director had recently resigned, and that VVCC was recruiting for their replacements.

### **Inspections**

The VVCC is waiting on state licensure, Medicaid, Medicare and USDVA surveys to arrive. Mr. Van Thiel said he expects no problems.

### **Nursing staff**

Mr. Van Thiel explained that the VVCC continues to monitor nursing salaries to attract and retain qualified nursing staff.

### **Domiciliary Care section exercise equipment**

Mr. Van Thiel told the members that new exercise equipment had been set up for the residents of the Domiciliary Care section. Previously, the residents had used the equipment in the rehab area, but there was just not enough equipment for both purposes.

### **Future USDVA Surveys**

Finally, Mr. Van Thiel discussed proposed changes by the USDVA in the survey process, where they would contract out inspections for state homes. He said that he preferred the interaction with residents of the local VA Medical Center, and would prefer to keep the current system.

## **Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Update**

Mrs. Ranicki covered the following topics:

### **Employees/HR**

- The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) currently has 31 employees, including department managers, nursing supervisors, and housekeeping staff

### Equipment/Facilities

- SBVCC received its Certificate of Occupancy this week, meaning that the building has been turned over from the construction company to the state. However, some construction activities were still ongoing to finish small projects
- The facility is now starting to order equipment to run the facility, such as kitchen equipment and medicine carts
- The Directors of Therapy and Rehabilitation have just been hired and will be selecting and ordering equipment that needs to go into the therapy department to make it operational

### Licenses

- SBVCC is working on the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) licensure requirements
- SBVCC will need to obtain a separate license due to the fact that there is an in-house pharmacy
- SBVCC has started the USDVA certification process

### Operations

- Department Managers are writing policy and procedures to go through the inspection processes, such as VDH, pharmacy board, USDVA, and CMS
- Computer software programs should be up and running soon. Training will start on the programs next week. The software is to help with the clinical and financial billing operations
- Over sixty applications have already been received.
- Admission should begin in November. A high occupancy rate is expected. Two to three new residences will be admitted per day so that each resident and their family can have a pleasant moving-in experience
- SBVCC will fill one ward at a time, with the exception of the Alzheimer and the special units. Specialized and Alzheimer's units will be filled as soon as the licensure inspections are complete

### Flagpoles

- Three new flag poles will be put up in front of the building

### **Long-term Care Study**

Dr. Louis F. Rossiter, Director of the Schroeder Center for Healthcare Policy at the College of William & Mary, presented the Executive Summary of the "Long-Term Care Feasibility Study: Quality Care They Earned" to the committee. The study was conducted by the Schroeder Center and the First Chesapeake Group.

Dr. Rossiter explained that the purpose of the study was to examine the current and future long-term care needs of veterans and to make recommendations for new facilities and services. Dr. Rossiter gave a brief overview of the six primary recommendations for long-term care for veterans:

- The General Assembly of Virginia should consider matching state funds for federal grants to construct up to three new veterans care centers with as many as 200 beds each including 40-bed secure special units and 40-bed domiciliary care units. These three centers are in addition to the veterans care center planned for Hampton Roads
- Two new Virginia Veterans Care Centers in the Northern Virginia Planning District (Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Alexandria City, Fairfax City, Falls Church City, Manassas City, and Manassas Park City) and in the West Piedmont Planning District (Franklin, Henry, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Danville City, and Martinsville City) would be located near the largest veteran population centers without a veterans care center and travel times of at least two hours from existing or planned facilities in usual traffic
- A third new veterans care center in either the Lenowisco Planning District (Lee, Norton City, Scott, Wise), Southside Planning District (Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg), or Accomack-Northampton Planning District (Accomack, Northampton) would be located near veteran population centers without a veterans care center and with high proportion of Medicaid and low income residents
- Virginia should begin to build a continuum of long-term care to better serve veterans in the future
- Some existing and planned long-term care beds should be committed to veterans with traumatic brain injury returning from the Global War on Terrorism
- Forty domiciliary beds, rather than 80, should be added to the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center

Dr. Rossiter explained that the report shows that new veterans care centers in the Northern Virginia and West Piedmont Planning Districts are justified based on the number of unserved veterans. Dr. Rossiter said that while most veterans are able to take care of their own long-term health care needs (only 50% turning to the USDVA for health care) there are some areas of the state there are more likely to be veterans who lack the means to afford health care. He pointed out that this should be taken into account regarding the construction of a third new care center.

Dr. Rossiter then stated that the trend in the health care industry is towards home and community-based care and not on the construction of new facilities. He strenuously advised the Department of Veterans Services to consider this in any further planning efforts, stating that any new facility construction has to be considered in the broader context of a continuum of care for Virginia's veterans. To better serve veterans, any continuum of care should include the ability to better "hand off" veterans from one stage of care to the next, so that veterans' needs are best addressed at the proper level.

Regarding the SBVCC addition, Dr. Rossiter pointed out that while the veterans' population in the Richmond area could support an 80-bed domiciliary bed addition, only 40 beds should be

constructed. The need for beds is far greater in Hampton Roads and in Northern Virginia, and the 40 beds should be committed to those areas.

Dr. Rossiter concluded by saying that the report does not address the issue of waiting lists at the care centers. He recommended that DVS seek authority regarding priority of care and waiting lists. He also pointed out that grants are available for Adult Day Health Care, and that application for these grants could be a first step in the creation of a continuum of care for veterans.

The members discussed the subject of respite care – short-term and emergency – and the role of the care centers in assisting families facing this situation.

Hard copies of the study should be available in the coming weeks and will be distributed to the board.

### **New Business**

Commissioner Burgess stated that a new DVS logo is being unveiled, and that an example of the new logo was on the back of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Dedication Ceremony program.

### **Public Comment Period**

No public was at the meeting to give any comments.

### **Schedule Next Meeting Date and Location**

Commissioner Burgess said that he would like to schedule the next meeting in January or February of 2008 at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center. When a date is set, it sent out to all board members.

### **Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.